THE COMMUNICATOR
The USAID PHN Newsletter for CAs
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The Communicator's Goals:
* To increase the flow of information between USAID's Bureau for Global Health and CAs engaged in communications and public relations work
* To enhance awareness of the need to disseminate news about our work and to show why it is important
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If you would like back issues of The Communicator, e-mail lchomiak@phn.pal-tech.com.

IN THIS ISSUE

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KEEP YOUR WEB SITE UPDATED

In the past few issues we have encouraged you to communicate your work by drafting success stories and writing letters to the editor. Another good and simple way to spread the word is letting others know about changes and updates on your organization's Web site. Just prepare a short e-mail to inform your audiences of new findings, tools that have been developed, or new items posted on your site, and provide a link to your Web site.

DELIVER Example

Below is an example of how DELIVER markets its Web site while also informing others about new work and projects.

"Dear DELIVER Staff and Partners:

We have made a number of exciting changes and updates to the DELIVER Web site. Visit the site at www.deliver.jsi.com to view the following new materials.

LSAT and LIAT evaluation tools
New DELIVER publication on-line
Automated publications order form
Publications customer survey
Powerpoint presentations and media coverage from Ghana and Bangladesh contraceptive security events
Four new On Track articles on Benin, Bangladesh, Ghana, and ProQ software for quantifying HIV test procurement requirements
What's New stories
Updated field office contacts
Comments and questions about the DELIVER Web site are welcome."

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HOW TO GET A REPORTER'S ATTENTION

In her newsletter "Getting Attention," editor and publisher Nancy Schwartz summarizes the "do"s and "don't"s on how to get a reporter's attention. Here's a summary.

What to do?
Know the stories the reporter writes and make a pitch that fits with those subjects. Do background research to find out what the reporter is interested in. Before calling the journalist for the first time, drop an e-mail with your comments and a very soft and respectful pitch (i.e. "I thought you might be interested in…").
Respect news judgment (what runs) and the reporter's time management.
Aim for a long-term relationship with the journalist, instead of quick-hit story coverage.
Invite the reporter to lunch or a cup of coffee. The best way to get him/her to your news conference may be to precede or follow it with lunch. Don't be offended if the journalist insists on paying his/her own way, even if it's a spread you put on at your place. Some news organizations don't allow freebies, not even a sandwich.
Look for the "teachable moment" with one eye trained on today's breaking news and, better yet, what will be in tomorrow's news.
Target your story on what your organization is doing that impacts breaking news (even sports), rather than simply reporting on activities.

What NOT to do?
Don't leave long voicemails.
Don't focus on why the story is important to you rather than to the reporter and to his/her readers.
Don't think there's only one right story about your organization instead of many.
Don't get annoyed or act rudely if the story on your organization is cut or doesn't run.

[Source: Getting Attention – How to Design an Effective Marketing and Communications Budget, contact nancy@nancyschwartz.com for content reuse]

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RESOURCES FOR YOU

Web Sites We Find Useful. . .

Organizing events that have long-term impact are important tools in a communicator's arsenal. The Media Education Foundation provides a useful overview that can help guide your plans. For instance, during a media literacy event the Foundation organized, planners first invited a prominent speaker to draw a larger crowd. Secondly they organized an all-day public forum on media issues followed by a benefit reception. Afterwards, planners organized a number of cosponsored community outreach and publicity efforts. This approach boosted both awareness and participation.

Throughout the planning stages for the events described above, organizers always focused on an initial set of goals:

Introduced the words and concepts of "media literacy" and "media education" into the mainstream local culture.
Used local media/press to communicate the organization's work and mission and to help promote events.
Involved local government officials in supporting the media literacy movement.
Provided alternatives to mainstream programming.
Identified and met potential financial supporters and volunteers.

For more detailed information on the planning stages and other useful tips, go to www.mediaed.org and follow the link to the article entitled "How to Organize a Media Education Week or Event."

[Source: www.mediaed.org/events/articles/organize by Talitha Abramsen and Tom Gardner]

Communicating a "Good Message"

The new installment of eCatalyst, IMPACS's monthly newsletter, presents advice on creating a "good message." In summary, a key message is a necessary supplement to the organization's core message, which clearly defines the organization. The core message should contain a statement that is general in nature, as well as an active verb – and don't forget the name of your organization (sounds obvious, but many times this is not included). For instance, a social service agency chose "People First grows healthy children" as its core message.

Once the core message is determined, your organization may develop one or more key messages. Key messages describe what your organization does to achieve its goal and support the core message. Both key and core messages depend on each other and present a much stronger and convincing statement when associated together. For example, if your core message states "People First grows healthy children," key messages could be "People First provides support services to single parents" or "People First ensures school-age children eat one healthy hot meal each day."

[Source: www.impacs.org]

How Not to Irritate Your Web Site's Visitors
Stephanie Vance of AdVanced Consulting has a monthly e-letter (Advocacy Tipsheet) that provides useful communication techniques geared toward those working with Congress but which can be applied across the board. In her October issue, she discussed ways to improve Web sites. Thought we'd pass on an abridged version of some of her tips. (Stephanie, by the way, recently spoke at USAID about outreach techniques and is a fount of information -- check her out on the Web at www.advocacyguru.com.)
Know why they are coming to your site: In most cases, users are coming to your site for one of five reasons. (1) They want to learn about your issues. (2) They want to contact you through e-mail, regular mail, or telephone. (3) They want to volunteer or contribute to your cause. (4) They want to get involved anonymously. (5) They want to criticize your cause. Your navigation structure should simply and clearly make all these opportunities available (except, perhaps, for number five). Think about having four simple navigation buttons on the home page called "About," "Contact Us," "Volunteer/Contribute," and "Get Involved." Under these various pages, consider who is coming to that page and what they want to do there. For example, the media may be coming to your "about" page to learn more about your cause and to get quotes. So make sure that in addition to a general background on your effort, you've got a button called "for the media," which provides immediate access to quotes, pictures, and any articles you've written.
Make everything accessible: One of the sites we had the opportunity to look at had nothing but links to PDF files. If you wanted to learn anything about the campaign, you had to download a file, open it, and read it. While PDFs are great in certain circumstances, they are not appropriate for every situation. Provide as much information as you can in simple, easy-to-read text, and be sure your navigation system always allows people to get back to a home page or a site map.

Let them contact you directly: Even if you're concerned about the volume of mail that an actual e-mail address will engender, include one. You can always set up an "auto-response" that allows you to send a message back immediately to those who e-mail you. Finally, think about who needs to contact you. For example, you should have a general information e-mail, an e-mail for the media, one for volunteers, etc., etc. Separate e-mail accounts are relatively easy to set up and can be configured to arrive automatically in one place.
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WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

JHPIEGO's MNH Update

The Maternal & Neonatal Health (MNH) Program at the JHPIEGO Corporation produces monthly MNH updates for those who work to promote maternal and neonatal health. The site reports on activities and accomplishments of the MNH program.

Most recent updates include:

Honduran Ministry of Health Allocates Counterpart Funds to Expand EMNC Training
Bolivian Ministry of Health Names MNH Program-Trained Doctor Official Trainer of the Maternal and Child Health Division
Health Center in San Pablo, San Marcos, Guatemala, Receives Attention

To read more about MNH updates go to www.mnh.jhpiego.org/updates

EngenderHealth's "Compass"

This past fall, EngenderHealth launched a new and periodic publication called "Compass," which targets individuals and communities involved in international public health and development. "Compass" features snapshots of EngenderHealth's work in the areas of family planning, prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and maternal care. "Compass" is available at
www.engenderhealth.org/pubs/compass/index.html in PDF format. You can also contact EngenderHealth directly for print copies.

The Equity Project 2002 Annual Report

Carmen Urdaneta at the Management Sciences for Health-administered Equity Project sent in the 2002 Annual Report. It has a terrific blend of anecdotes and human interest stories, as well as progress assessment, making it an excellent document to share with folks not as well acquainted with development work (such as media, non-donor partners, and even Congress). Carmen also has been refining "collecting stories" guidelines. In the next issue, we'll share these with you, and we would like your feedback on how they work. Using these "from the technical to the topical" tips to help generate human interest

stories from the field has worked for communicators. The hardest thing seems to be getting technical folks to use them. If you have any "best practices" on getting stories from the field, please share them with us. They can be incorporated into this tool and perhaps prove even more useful as we seek stories that resonate with the public. Send your ideas to lchomiak@phn.pal-tech.com.

Check Out This Publication
"The Evaluation Exchange" is a publication of the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Family Research Project. It focuses on emerging strategies in child and family services evaluation, and the Winter 2002 issue is devoted to public communication campaigns designed and employed to shape behavior toward desirable social outcomes. One article is devoted to the family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs. Evaluating public communication campaigns and determining the main ingredients of successful campaigns are among the other topics covered. Check it out at www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue20.

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YOUR FEEDBACK

With your participation this newsletter can increase our interaction and participation in getting the word out about what we do. Let us know what you would like to see in this newsletter, what topics you want covered, or what additional items should be included. We also encourage you to become a contributor -- pass along stories about your program, including poignant accounts, major accomplishments, new publications, awards received, or upcoming conferences, to lchomiak@phn.pal-tech.com.

Also, if you know people who should get this newsletter, let us know so we can add them to our subscribers list.

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